

APPENDIX J

The Dubious Orthodoxy of Metropolitan Cyprian's Group

(Translated from *Church News* [in Russian], No. 5,
Sept.–Oct. 1994, pp. 2–4.)

The newspaper *Pravoslavnaya Rus*, in its issue number seventeen of the present year, published the Decision of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad concerning the establishment of prayerful eucharistic communion with the group of Old Calendarists headed by Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Fili.¹

In its concluding section the Decision elucidates the causes that prompted the Sobor to take this step. However, in not one of its six points does it mention that the Sobor of 1975 resolved not to have communion with the Greek groups until they themselves had become united, and the Synod, already presided over by Metropolitan Vitaly, reaffirmed this wise decision in the spring of 1993, that is, a mere year and a half ago. Everyone is aware that the Greek groups can in no wise boast of having already achieved unity, yet the present Conciliar Decision offers no explanation whatsoever for this abrogation by the Sobor of its previous resolutions.

Thus, in the Decision it is stated,

After deliberation and analysis of all aspects of these questions [concerning the history and ideology of this group]² the Council of Bishops maintains that at the present time, when apostasy is spreading and the so-called official representatives of Orthodoxy, such as the Patriarchate of Constantinople and other patriarchates, are succumbing to and embracing the position of the modernists and ecumenists, it is very important for the True Orthodox to unite, make a stand together, and oppose the betrayers of the Orthodoxy of the Holy Fathers. In this regard, the Council of Bishops has decided:

¹ For the complete English text of this Decision, see *Orthodox Life*, no. 4, 1994, pp. 49–50.

² Addition in brackets made by Bishop Gregory.



Metropolitan Kallistos of Corinth and Father George (later Bishop Gregory) Grabbe at the Russian Synod headquarters in New York, in 1973.

1) To establish communion in prayer and the Eucharist with the Greek Old Calendarist synod of Metropolitan Cyprian, as well as with His Grace, Bishop Photios of Triaditsa, who heads the Bulgarian Old Calendar diocese.

Bishop Photios was consecrated for the Bulgarians by the self-same Metropolitan Cyprian, and thus his legitimacy is dependent upon the legitimacy of Metropolitan Cyprian.

It is of interest that our Sobor, while seeking union with the "True Orthodox" Greek groups, made no effort whatsoever toward unity with the far more numerous and decent group of Archbishop Chrysostom [Kioussis] of Athens, who has a sobor consisting of nineteen bishops.

The second point [of the Decision] deals with informing the flock abroad of this event.

In point number three it is stated, "During the deliberations, the statements of those opposed to the union were also taken into account, in which the question was raised concerning the canonicity of Metropolitan Cyprian's group and their allegedly un-Orthodox teaching on grace."

Aside from his personal teaching on grace (more on this below), Metropolitan Cyprian has likewise been accused of preaching the heresy of chiliasm.

Concerning the "canonicity" of this group, quite enough has already been said and written. But what then is their "allegedly un-Orthodox teaching on grace"?

Preparing the ground for possible union with the Church Abroad well in advance, Metropolitan Cyprian issued a pamphlet entitled "An Ecclesiological Thesis, or Exposition on the Doctrine of the Church, for the Orthodox Opposed to the Heresy of Ecumenism."³ It would seem that, judging from the title of the pamphlet, nothing could be said against such a program. The pamphlet is quite handsomely printed, even to the point of using the old orthography [i.e., pre-Revolutionary]. It was very widely distributed, and each member of the Bishops' Sobor undoubtedly received a copy.

However, with great consternation and dismay one is forced to point out that apparently the very members of the Bishops' Committee investigating the Greek question themselves,⁴ and all the members of the Bishops' Sobor together, failed to pursue sufficiently what is called "reading between the lines" of this pamphlet, which abounds in ancient texts and is deftly put together, but which bears little relation to the contemporary ecclesiastical situation.

Moreover, it is obvious that they took scant notice of the canonicity (very doubtful) of Metropolitan Cyprian's group, for the subject is not at all reflected in the text of the Sobor's Decision. Likewise evident is the fact that the committee took no account whatsoever of the motives behind our own previous resolutions.

Let us now attempt to determine precisely what sort of Orthodoxy Metropolitan Cyprian does confess and whether or not one

³ For the English text of this thesis see *The Old Calendar Orthodox Church of Greece*, by Bishop Chrysostom Gonzalez (Etna, California: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 1991), pp. 83-92.

⁴ The committee was comprised of Archbishop Laurus, Bishop Daniel, and Bishop Mitrophan.

can actually say with a clear conscience that both he and his synod "adhere wholly to the exact same ecclesiological and dogmatic principles as our Russian Church Outside Russia" (point five of the Sobor's Decision).

In the chapter [of the pamphlet] entitled "The Church and Heresy," page two, it says:

Sinners and those who err in correctly understanding the Faith, yet who have not been sentenced by ecclesiastical action, are simply considered ailing members of the Church. The Mysteries of these unsentenced members are valid as such, according to the Seventh Ecumenical Council, as, for example, the President of the Council, Saint Tarasios, remarks: "[their] Ordination" "is from God."⁵

Later, in the third chapter, the author turns to the matter, "The Division in the Church Over Ecumenism"—as he calls it.

It seems strange to hear from a bishop who proclaims his Orthodoxy the idea that the Church can be "divided." The holy Fathers have taught that she always was, is, and shall be the indivisible Bride of Christ. One can only fall away from her or be reunited to her through repentance. Metropolitan Anthony [Khrapovitsky] especially emphasized to his priests the necessity, after confession, of reading the ancient prayer of absolution which contains the words, "reconcile and unite him to Thy holy Church," thereby indicating that he who sins falls away from the Church. Although private confession can heal personal moral falls, it in no wise cures a public and obdurate inclination to heresy.

Metropolitan Cyprian correctly points out that the beginning of the malady was the introduction of the Western calendar into the life of the Church in 1924. But then later he advances an opinion which in no wise corresponds to the present ecclesiastical situation. "The followers of the festal calendar innovation," says he,

have not yet been specifically judged in a pan-Orthodox fashion, as provided for by the Orthodox Church. As Saint Nicodemos

⁵ See Editors' Note on pp. 250-254 for more on this question.

of the Holy Mountain writes, the violator of established precepts is considered sentenced, insofar as he is judged by "the second entity (which is the Council or Synod)." Since 1924, the innovators have been awaiting judgment and shall be judged on the basis of the decisions of the holy Councils, both Ecumenical and local, and, to be sure, on the basis of the ecclesiastical pronouncements of the sixteenth century against what were then Papal proposals for changes in the festal calendar. *In this respect those who have walled themselves off from the innovators have actually broken communion "before conciliar or synodal verdict," as is allowed in the Fifteenth Canon of the First-and-Second Council. That is to say, the innovators are still unsentenced. Consequently,* [according to the teaching of Metropolitan Cyprian],⁶ *their Mysteries are valid.* [Emphasis mine.]⁷

Metropolitan Cyprian chooses a convenient quotation from this canon to suit his purpose, but intentionally does not cite the subsequent text of the canon concerning those who separate themselves from their presidents before a synodical judgment in cases where the open preaching of heresy is taking place:

Such persons as these not only are not subject to canonical penalty for walling themselves off from communion with the so-called bishop before synodical clarification, but [on the contrary] they shall be deemed worthy of due honor among the Orthodox. For not bishops, but false bishops and false teachers have they condemned, and they have not fragmented the Church's unity with schism, but from schisms and divisions have they earnestly sought to deliver the Church. (Canon Fifteen of the so-called First-Second Council)

The adherents of Roman Catholicism in Russia have from of old cited the fact that not one Ecumenical Council has ever condemned Roman Catholicism and therefore it, they say, is not a heresy. Such an opinion was quite widespread among our intelligentsia, and especially in military circles.

⁶ Addition in brackets made by Bishop Gregory.

⁷ Bishop Gregory's note.

Chapter Four is entitled "Repentance and Return." That which is expounded therein concerning the principle of repentance is entirely correct and in accord with the canons. Yet while offering us numerous examples of repentance which took place at one or another Ecumenical Council, Metropolitan Cyprian never so much as mentions the fact that the New Calendarists/Ecumenists not only have no intention whatsoever of repenting, but on the contrary, they persecute the True Orthodox in a most cruel manner. We have before our very eyes the example of how quite recently they "strangled," one could say, Patriarch Diodoros of Jerusalem, who was attempting to defend the Orthodoxy of the holy Fathers. Only a few months have now passed since they—by means of threats of expulsion from their monasteries, and canonical sanctions—have forced to repent before them that last bastion of Orthodoxy, the Holy Mountain, which was defending the Church from the inroads of the heresy of Ecumenism.

Metropolitan Cyprian sees no grounds for severing communion with the New Calendarists/Ecumenists until such time as it will be possible for a future Ecumenical Council to judge them. But who could not be aware (including the Metropolitan himself) that for almost twenty years now the ecumenists have been preparing the program for the future—and not in the least Orthodox—"Eighth Ecumenical Council"? The Preconciliar Committee has already on more than one occasion published its drafts for the reports to be delivered at this future "Council." The issues to be discussed at it include the unification of all Christians, the total abolition of the fasts, married bishops, and second marriages for the clergy.

Who, then, will be the president of this dishonorable assembly, which, according to Metropolitan Cyprian's daydreams, is supposed to condemn the Ecumenists/New Calendarists? Obviously that crypto-Roman Catholic, the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. And those like unto him will prove to be its members: the Patriarch of Alexandria, Parthenios (who has officially declared Mohammed to be a great prophet and personally considers him an Apostle!); the Patriarch of Antioch (who has already issued a directive to his clergy granting them permission to concelebrate with the heretical Monophysites); the Patriarch of Moscow (who has

signed both the Balamand Unia and the agreement concerning the Monophysites, and who has even initiated a dialogue with the Jews "on the highest possible level").⁸

I have been given the opportunity to acquaint myself with several letters written by one of the bishops of Metropolitan Cyprian's group. From these it is quite evident that he and his fellow bishops confess their own personal, and in no wise Orthodox, doctrine concerning the possibility of the grace-filled activity of the Holy Spirit within churches which have become manifestly heretical. *ALL the New Calendarists—without the least exception—are likewise very active ecumenists.*⁹ The Old Style Churches (Russian and Serbian) have for a long time now also confessed this very same heresy.

But behold, this hierarch of Metropolitan Cyprian's group insists on the opinion that, so he says, "the New Calendarists, besieged by the heresy of ecumenism and innovation, have not been deprived of grace,¹⁰ or at any rate, it is not within our competency to make such a pronouncement on our part . . . we are not speaking of union with Belial, but (only) with those ailing in faith, several of whom are in need of spiritual treatment . . . in view of this, we do not totally break off communion with them."¹¹ In another letter the same hierarch expresses the thought—totally unacceptable and absurd from a dogmatic point of view and from that of the holy Fathers—that his group, while recognizing that the ecumenists have grace, is only "walling itself off from their errors."

In pronouncing its Decision concerning communion with Metropolitan Cyprian's group, our Sobor, unfortunately, did not also call to mind the text of that Decision taken formerly, under

⁸ *Editors' Note:* From this argumentation offered by Metropolitan Cyprian, it would appear that we must wait until the Patriarchates of Constantinople, Jerusalem, Alexandria, Antioch, and the others gather in a council to condemn themselves.

⁹ Bishop Gregory's emphasis.

¹⁰ *Editors' Note:* How is it possible to speak of the New Calendarists being "besieged" by the heresy of Ecumenism and innovation, when all the facts indicate that they are completely voluntary and willing participants and perpetrators of these violations, and in some instances, even originators? What tyrannical force is "besieging" them?

¹¹ *Translator's Note:* Not being a party to this correspondence, we are forced here to render it back into English according to the Russian translation.

the presidency of Metropolitan Philaret, anathematizing the heresy of Ecumenism. Among others it contains such words as these: *"Therefore, to those who knowingly have communion with these aforementioned heretics, or who advocate, disseminate, or defend their new heresy of Ecumenism: Anathema."*¹²

Indeed, by not investigating the matter seriously and by forgetting about this previously confirmed anathematizing of the New Calendarists/Ecumenists (or perhaps not venturing to abrogate this resolution), our Sobor, as frightful as it may be to admit, has fallen under its own anathema. Had it probed the net spread before it more carefully, it would never have issued such a contradictory Decision.

Our previous Bishops' Sobors never raised the particular question concerning whether or not the New Calendarists have grace. But the fact that formerly concelebrations with them were never permitted already testifies with sufficient clarity that the Church Abroad considered them to be without grace.

Must we consider that our Synod has entered upon the path of betrayal of the traditions of the holy Fathers, or did it merely commit an error owing to poor judgment which it is still not too late to correct at the next session of the Sobor to be held in November in France?¹³

✠ Bishop Gregory

EDITORS' NOTE *On the Phrase: "The ordination is from God"*

During the iconoclastic period, many defected to this heresy and accepted ordination from the iconoclasts. When some of these men petitioned to return to the Church, the Fathers of the Seventh Ecumenical Council asked whether the iconoclast clergy should be received as clergy, or should the ordination they received from the heretics be rejected?

¹² Bishop Gregory's emphasis. For the full text of this anathema and a sobering commentary on the Russian Church Abroad's Sobor of 1983 by the then Archbishop Vitaly see *Pravoslavnaya Rus*, No. 10, 1983, pp. 3-4. For an English translation, see *Orthodox Christian Witness*, Vol. 18, No. 1, pp. 2-6.

¹³ *Editors' Note:* The hierarchy of the Russian Church Abroad did not retract this decision.

The expression "the ordination is from God" is taken from the Acts of the Seventh Ecumenical Council and was uttered by Saint Tarasius, who was Patriarch of Constantinople when the Seventh Ecumenical Council was convoked (787). It was used in reference to Saint Anatolius, Patriarch of Constantinople (449-458), who had been consecrated bishop by the heretic Dioscurus in a liturgy in which the archimandrite Eutyches, also a heretic, had concelebrated. Saint Tarasius's view—that is, that the ordination performed by the heretical Dioscurus was "from God"—appears, at first sight, to agree with the view that the ordinations (and, consequently, all the sacraments of the heterodox) are sanctified and valid, like the Mysteries of the Church. Hence, heretics who return to the Church's bosom must be considered as having a valid ordination that is "from God."

Nonetheless, it is well known that, according to the Church's teaching, heretics do not have a priesthood, do not have Mysteries, and that their ordinations and all their other rituals are without substance, without sanctifying grace.

Not only do the heterodox not have Mysteries, but even the canonically ordained Orthodox lose their priesthood when they fall into heresy, without there being any need for a conciliar decision to declare this.

For example, the Fourth Ecumenical Council refers to the Archimandrites Carosus and Dorotheus simply as monks because their confession of faith was faulty; yet, they had not yet been officially deposed.

Saint Hypatius of Rufiniana declared that Nestorius "was not a bishop" even before he had been deposed by the Third Ecumenical Council. Also, the 15th Canon of the First-Second Council says that bishops who teach heresy are "pseudo-bishops."

If one considers that Nestorius and the bishops referred to in the First-Second Council *had been consecrated bishops within the Church*, but later fell away into heresy, lost the grace of the priesthood, and became pseudo-bishops—that is, laymen—one will understand that they who were ordained *within heresy* are by all means deprived of valid ordination.

Also, regarding the office of an Orthodox bishop, Saint Symeon of Thessalonica says that "by his divine consecration, the grace of God ceases not to work through him, unless only he err regarding the Faith" (*Vlatadon* 165. 220). That is, when a bishop who is Orthodox and canonically ordained errs in matters of the Faith, grace ceases to work through him.

The Mysteries of the Heterodox

If the mysteries of the heterodox are "from God," then why does the 46th Apostolic Canon depose those who accept these "mysteries" ("We ordain that those who accept the baptism or the sacrifice of heretics be deposed.")?

When Pope Saint Leo of Rome wrote to Saint Anatolius, Patriarch of Constantinople (*Epistle* 106:1) and counseled him "to make good use of a bad beginning" (*Post Nicene Fathers*, 77B), should he have not been esteemed blasphemous in calling an ordination that was "from God" a "bad beginning"?

"Let no one be deceived; whosoever is not within the altar is deprived of the Bread of God" (Saint Ignatius the God-bearer, *Letter to the Ephesians* 5:2).

In the very Acts of the Seventh Ecumenical Council, reference is made to Saint Basil's words: "I acknowledge no bishop, nor would I number among the priests of God one who had been advanced [to the priesthood] by defiled hands for the destruction of the Faith" (*PG* 32, 897 AB).

"We know that salvation itself is a property of the One Church, and that no one can be outside of the Catholic Church and yet share in the Faith of Christ, or be saved. . . Neither do we offer any part of that hope to the ungodly heretics, but we place them entirely outside that hope; indeed, they have not the least participation in Christ, but vainly assume for themselves that saving Name" (Saint John Chrysostom, *PG* 59: 725). "[The clergy] who broke away [from the Church] and became laity are no longer able to impart the grace of the Holy Spirit from which they themselves fell away. Hence, they who were baptized by them were commanded to come into the Church like ones baptized by

laymen and to be cleansed again by the true Baptism of the Church" (Saint Basil the Great, *Epistle 188:1*).

"The Jews no longer offer sacrifice; their hands are full of blood, for they have not accepted the Word, through Whom men offer sacrifice to God. The same is true of all the assemblies of the heretics . . ." (Saint Irenaeus, *Ad. Haer.* IV, 18, 4).

"Since it is impossible that there should be two baptisms, he that concedes that the heretics have baptism deprives himself of baptism" (Local Council of Carthage, under Saint Cyprian, *Mansi* 1, 980).

"It is not meet to receive the blessings of heretics, for they are rather foolishness than blessings" (Laodicea, canon 32—In Greek, there is a play on the words *eulogia*—"blessing"—and *alogia*—"foolishness").

"No heretic grants sanctification through his mysteries" (Pope Saint Leo of Rome, *Epistle 159, to Nicetas*).

"For they are not priests . . . nor are they that are baptized by them initiated, but rather *they are defiled*; nor have they received the forgiveness of sins, but rather the bonds of ungodliness . . ." (*Apostolic Constitutions*, 6: 15).

Heretics Regain Grace When They Return to the Church

"The sacrifices of heretics can never be acceptable to God, unless they are offered in their behalf by the hands of the universal Church; . . . these [sacrifices of the heretics] are not united to the perfection of sevenfold grace, except by [the heterodox] returning" (Saint Gregory the Great of Rome, *Interpretation of Job*, Prologue 17, p. 28).

Concerning Saint Anatolius, the Patriarch of Constantinople mentioned above, Pope Saint Leo of Rome writes, "On account of the fact that Anatolius was united to the Orthodox Faith, we left the matters of his consecration unexamined" (*Letter to Emperor Marcian*, PG 140: 785 B, C).¹⁴

¹⁴ Cf. also Metropolitan Philaret's "not as ones possessing grace, but as ones receiving it by the very act of union," p. 208 above.

Consequently, if Saint Tarasius's opinion in this particular matter does not express the consensus of the Fathers, then we must follow the consensus of the Fathers and not a particular view. It is not permissible to use an isolated and disputed viewpoint in order to support an ecclesiology which comes into contradiction with the Fathers, and with the mind and practice of the Church.

However, it may be that there is also a correct interpretation of this phrase "from God." This indeed seems to be the case, because it seems improbable that Saint Tarasius, the president of the Seventh Ecumenical Council and one of the great Fathers, would err in such a basic matter regarding the Church's sacramental integrity and boundaries. An ancient historian has shed light on this subject and expressed the true meaning of the words "the ordination is from God." This historian writes that Dioscurus, the Patriarch of Alexandria, consecrated Anatolius, his *apocrisarios* in Constantinople, because he believed that, as Patriarch, Anatolius would promote Dioscurus's heretical ideas ("he assumed that he would uphold his own [Dioscurus's] doctrines"). Then, the same historian continues, "yet even in this, God arranged matters to the contrary." That is, God arranged that something good would come out of this matter (*Select Readings from Church History*, by the Reader Theodore,¹⁵ Vol. I, p. 351).

Truly, "ordination is from God," and it is He Who chooses and sanctifies whom He will. The ordination of Saint Anatolius was accepted and validated by the Church and confirmed by God, whereupon it exists and is valid beyond any legalistic quibblings, because it has been given content in and by the Church. But this particular instance does not allow for a general acceptance of the sacraments of those who stubbornly teach doctrines and implement practices that have been condemned and anathematized by the Church's Local, Ecumenical, and Pan-Orthodox Councils.

¹⁵ Theodore the Reader served in the Church of the Holy Wisdom in Constantinople in the sixth century. In the year 530, at the urging of Bishop Procopius of Gangra in Paphlagonia, he composed a Church History covering the years 323-439. This History, known as *Historia Tripartita*, is an abbreviation of the older histories compiled by Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret.